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NEW YORK TIMES
17 March 1987

Israel Reportedly Paid Part Of Pollard's Legal Expenses

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Special to The New York Times

JERUSALEM, March 16 — The Israeli Government has helped to pay the legal bills of Jonathan Jay Pollard, the American intelligence analyst sentenced to life in prison last month for spying for Israel, Israel radio reported today.

The radio said "state elements in Israel" transferred \$80,000 by unspecified indirect means to the defense of Mr. Pollard and his wife, Anne Henderson-Pollard. Mrs. Henderson-Pollard was sentenced to five years for helping her husband to pass hundreds of top-secret American documents to the Israeli Government.

The couple's total legal expenses were reported to be somewhere between \$120,000 to \$200,000. The radio report did not say when the transfer took place or whether the Israeli Government planned to make additional payments to the Pollards.

Israel radio said the funds were provided to James Hibey, a Washington lawyer, whom it described as the lawyer for Mr. Pollard and his wife. But while James Hibey represents Mrs. Henderson-Pollard, the counsel for Mr. Pollard is his brother, Richard Hibey.

James Hibey, in a telephone interview in Washington, denied receiving any funds from the Israeli Government. There was no comment from Richard Hibey.

The radio report came after both Prime Minister Yitzhak Shamir and Foreign Minister Shimon Peres declared last week that because Mr. Pollard's espionage was not authorized by the Israeli Government, it had no obligation to help him or his wife.

A Foreign Ministry spokesman would neither confirm nor deny the radio report, saying only, "We have nothing on that." Israeli Government spokesmen also did not respond to questions on why Israel would be paying Mr. Pollard's legal expenses if his activities were unauthorized.

On Sunday, an Israeli newspaper quoted Rafael Eitan, named as the spy-master in the Pollard case, as saying that his superiors had known of the operation, contradicting the Government's position. Mr. Eitan later denied having made such a statement.

If the Government did provide legal funds for the Pollards, it may have done so because of the growing public sentiment in Israel in favor of helping the Pollards. Ever since the sentencing of Mr. Pollard, a 32-year-old former civilian intelligence analyst for the Navy, there has been a flood of letters to newspapers and news commentaries in the Israeli press expressing feelings of shame over the Israeli Government's apparent abandonment of the American couple.

A poll conducted by the Yediot Aharonot newspaper on Friday indicated that two-thirds of Israelis believed their Government should help the Pollards.

Ad Hoc Support Group Disbands

An ad hoc group calling itself "Citizens in Support of the Pollards" began collecting money on street corners and through newspaper appeals, arguing that Israel owed the Pollards something for all they did and all they suffered, whether the Government authorized them or not. Today, the group announced that it was disbanding since the Government had reportedly taken care of most of Mr. Pollard's legal bills.

"We feel we actually achieved our aim," said Yehoshua Gelbart, one of the group's organizers.

Defense Minister Yitzhak Rabin today denied reports that Israel may still be spying on the United States. Mr. Rabin was responding to a story in The Washington Post on Sunday, which said American investigators became suspicious during their questioning of Mr. Pollard that Israel had another agent working in an American intelligence operation.

"Let me make it clear," Mr. Rabin told a gathering of American Jews in Jerusalem. "There are no Americans or non-Americans that serve as spies for Israel against the United States."

Mr. Rabin was less categorical when it came to reports that the Defense Ministry unit that had recruited Mr. Pollard also used other Americans as agents.

"I believe it is not true," he said. "So far, no one can present any proof ... that there are others."

Mr. Rabin also accused American prosecutors of trying to tempt Col. Aviem Sella of the Israeli Air Force — one of the Israeli officials who coordinated Mr. Pollard's espionage operation in Washington — into avoiding indictment by naming other Americans spying for Israel.

Colonel Sella was eventually indicted for his role in the Israeli espionage scheme and this has almost certainly ended his chances of being promoted one day to be chief of the Israeli Air Force — a job for which he was widely touted. Colonel Sella is currently commander of one of the largest air bases in Israel — Tel Nof, south of Tel Aviv.

Mr. Rabin said "a key figure in the prosecution of Pollard" approached Colonel Sella's American lawyer and said, "From my point of view, Sella can be the chief of the Israeli Air Force if you give me another name or names."